

Darren Allen

Communications Director
Vermont-NEA
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As Vermont-NEA Communications Director, Darren Allen is responsible for informing members, partners, the public and media about the state's largest union. He is responsible for the Association's website, its monthly newspaper (one of the largest monthly publications in Vermont) and electronic communications. He also directs the Association's advertising strategy. Additionally, Darren helps local associations in crisis communication, as well as assisting the Association's leaders in forging its legislative and policy agendas.

A native of Southern California who grew up in the distant suburbs of Philadelphia and went to college in the Midwest, Darren spent 20 years as a reporter covering politics, education, business, the legal system and even the taxation of derivatives. He lives in Montpelier with his partner, Philene, and their three children.

Brenda Alvarez

Senior Public Relation Specialist
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Brenda Alvarez is a senior public relations specialist for the National Education Association. In addition to providing communications support to NEA leaders, she also serves as a liaison to nine states in the Northeast Region, offering media relations and communications assistance to state association leaders and members. Brenda has a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism from College Chicago and a Masters of Science degree in marketing communications from Roosevelt University, Chicago.

Celeste Busser

Senior Public Relations Specialist
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Celeste Busser is currently a senior public relations specialist in the NEA Public Relations department and has been with NEA for nearly 5 years. She primarily serves the Mid Atlantic region but has conducted numerous message and media training sessions and presentations on generational issues throughout the country. Previously, Celeste has served as an account supervisor for Hill and Knowlton International Public Relations and a PR specialist for GEICO. She holds a bachelor's degree in Journalism/Public Relations from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Al Calzini

Chief Negotiator & Teacher
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Al has been working with emotionally disordered students for the past eighteen years in both residential group home and public school settings. He is in his thirteenth year teaching at the Middlebury Union High School Alternative Education Program. In addition to his day job, Al teaches communications at Community College of Vermont. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Sociology and a Masters of Education from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Except for a two year stint as association president, Al has been chief negotiator for the Middlebury Education Association for the past ten years. He is a faithful participant in the Addison County Regional Bargaining Council, even going so far as to attend a monthly meeting while his wife was in labor. (Yes, we are still married!) Al lives in New Haven with his wife and four children who keep him very busy. When he does have any spare time, he enjoys playing guitar, photography and enjoying life with his family.

Ellen David Friedman

Former Organizer
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Ellen David Friedman worked as Vermont-NEA's Organizer from 1986-2006... and loved virtually every moment of it! Her greatest joy was helping thousands of school support staff throughout Vermont take that amazing, empowering step of organizing their own union. During this 20 years she mastered skills – in organizing, popular education, leadership development, building contract campaigns, strengthening democratic union practices – that she now applies in her work in Guangzhou, China where she works within the Chinese labor movement at different levels, and teaches courses on international comparative labor systems and the construction of civil society at Sun Yat-sen University. While in the U.S., she organizes exchanges and labor study tours between U.S. and Chinese unions, serves on the Policy Committee of Labor Notes (“*putting the movement back in the labor movement...*”) <http://labornotes.org/>, and coordinates a Solidarity Committee for the National Union of Healthcare Workers <http://www.nuhw.org/> which is fighting a David & Goliath battle against the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) to build a rank & file, democratic union movement in health care.

Sarah Faye Cohen

Librarian & Adjunct Professor
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Sarah Faye Cohen is a librarian and adjunct professor at Champlain College. She is also a consultant and blogger who focuses on deliberate decision making in the world of information, technology, and social media. When she isn't gardening, swimming in Lake Champlain, playing with her dog, or reading, Sarah is active in the Burlington community as the chair of the board at Burlington's Fletcher Free Library and a volunteer for Car Share Vermont. She is particularly interested in working with teachers and small organizations to develop distinctive presences in the 2.0 world. She blogs at <http://thesheckspot.blogspot.com> and can be found on Twitter as thesheck.

Jay DiGiulio

Board of Directors, VT-NEA
President and Teacher
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Jason Di Giulio teaches English for grades 7 -12 in Canaan, Vermont. He has served as vice president, grievance chair, and is now president of the Essex North Education Association. Jason is a GLBT Cadre member for the NEA. Assigned to the training cadre in 2008, Jason has traveled to Chicago, Pennsylvania and New Jersey to present about the bias that GLBT students face in school. The intersection between sexuality, perceived sexuality, gender and achievement is important to Jason. Along with teaching, writing and serving on the VT-NEA Board of Directors, Jason enjoys hitting his friends with sticks in the Society for Creative Anachronism.

JoAnn Karsh

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Member Organizing
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JoAnn began her staff work in the Education Association in 1985 as a UniServ Director. In 1994, JoAnn was hired as Director of Organizing for the VEA and provided support for locals in Issue and Relational organizing. JoAnn was fortunate to be trained by the Industrial Areas Foundation, a community based institute founded by Saul Alinsky. She has held a variety of positions within the Association – from membership development to political campaigns/GR to managing UniServ. While the job titles have changed and the assignments have shifted over the years, JoAnn’s approach to the work is based in the tenants of organizing. In her current position she manages 20 UniServ staff and has responsibility for membership development and organizing for the VEA.

Amy Lester

ELC – 2008
Vice President & Teacher
Barre EA
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Amy Lester is currently a Career and Technical Education Guidance Coordinator at a regional technical high school in Vermont. She serves as both vice president of her local teachers association and as a member of their grievance committee. She is also vice president of the Vermont Workers Center, a workers advocacy group based out of Burlington. Most recently, she serves as a member of the central Vermont organizing committee of the Health Care is a Human Right campaign. Besides working at a high school and political organizing, Amy is the mother of a thirteen year old and is looking for a new cat!

Emma Mulvaney-Stanak

Organizer
Vermont-NEA
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Emma Mulvaney-Stanak was born in Marshfield and grew up in Barre, Vermont. She graduated from Smith College in 2002 with a B.A in American Government. Emma has been Vermont-NEA's statewide organizer for two and a half years. As an organizer, she oversees Vermont-NEA's membership program, offers trainings on leadership and organizational development for Locals, leads contract campaign organizing drives, and assists Locals on special community organizing drives. She also assists employees who wish to organize new bargaining units around the state.

Prior to VT-NEA she directed the Vermont Livable Wage Campaign at the Peace & Justice Center (PJC) for four years. In this capacity, she oversaw two lobbying efforts to increase the state minimum wage for non-tipped workers and tipped workers. She also conducted multiple trainings on poverty and economic justice issues around the state

Emma Mulvaney-Stanak - continued

and region and lead several community-based organizing campaigns to assist low-wage workers receive livable wages.

Emma also helped develop the Recruitment for Peace Campaign, an effort to educate Vermont youth on alternatives to military enlistment, while at the PJC. In 2006, Emma did her civic duty and worked as the statewide Field Director for democratic gubernatorial candidate, Scudder Parker.

In her limited free time, Emma is serving her first term on the Burlington City Council. She also sits on the Vermont Women's Fund Council and serves as the Smith College Vermont Alumnae Admissions Coordinator.

John Pandolfo

Negotiator & Teacher
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John Pandolfo has worked as a High School Math Teacher for sixteen years, six in California and ten in Vermont. He has been a member of the Negotiation Team for the Barre Education Association and also served as Association President. He is currently on the Washington Central Education Association and U-32 Staff Association Negotiation Team. John also serves on the Vermont License Hearing Panel.

Dennis Slaughter

Organizational Specialist
National Education Association
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Dennis L. Slaughter, a 13-year staff member at the National Education Association, is an Organizational Specialist. In total, he has over twenty years of managerial and professional experience in education administration. Having experience in a variety of K-12 and post-secondary programs, he consults using principles of organization development, microeconomics, psychology, and law. His consulting practice is focused on effective communication, leadership training, strategic planning, team building, capacity building, diversity issues, membership development, fiscal management, conference planning, and community outreach/organizing.

He holds a Bachelor's degree in Music, a Master's degree in Education Administration, and a Doctoral degree in Law and Policy. He is married to Olivia Moorehead-Slaughter, PhD, a clinical psychologist; they have two teen-aged sons.

Cherrie Torrey

President & Teacher
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I am currently a fourth grade teacher at the Dothan Brook School in Wilder, VT. I also have taught in 2nd and 5th grades, all of which in the Hartford School District. I'm in my 30th year:) My local association roles have varied from building rep to president. My work on the negotiation team is the most time consuming and valuable. At the state level I was on the Board of Directors for 15 years and served on the Scholarship and Convention Committees. In my spare time I like to cook and do good deeds for others.

Maida Townsend

Former President
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Maida began teaching in Vermont in 1966. She taught novice to advanced French at West Rutland High School (1966 – 1969), Vergennes Union High School (1970 – 1981), and Winooski High School (1989 – 2008). She was also licensed to teach, and did teach at times during her career, English and Spanish in addition to French. She has served on numerous governing boards, and is currently in her seventh year on the Board of ACLU-VT. She was Chair of the Vermont State Democratic Committee from 1991 to 1995. She has served the Association in many capacities at the local and state levels. From 1981 to 1989, she served as Vermont-NEA President. Maida's personal interests include gardening, figure skating, and playing the French horn.